

**August 2005**

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# Victim Compensation Connection

## **Victim Compensation and Government Claims Board**

**Fred Aguiar**  
Chair  
Secretary, State and  
Consumer Services Agency

**Steve Westly**  
Board Member  
State Controller

**Michael Ramos**  
Board Member  
District Attorney  
San Bernardino County

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*Helping California crime  
victims since 1965*

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## **From the Desk of Karen McGagin, Executive Officer**

July 21, 2005 was a memorable day for everyone at the Board. We marked the 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Victim Compensation Program with a moving ceremony here in Sacramento. It was wonderful to set aside a special time to reflect on forty years of helping victims and to honor all the work that has been done by so many dedicated people for so long. In addition to our accomplished guest speaker, Judge Lois Haight, the three members of the Victim Compensation and Government Claims Board spoke at the event—Board Chair Fred Aguiar (Secretary of State and Consumer Services), Windie Scott (who represents State Controller Steve Westly on the Board), and Mike Ramos (San Bernardino County District Attorney), who graciously served as the master of ceremonies. I would like to thank the speakers and everyone who attended—Board staff members, victim advocates, victim witness coordinators and our partners in state government—for making the afternoon very special.



**Karen McGagin**

With our fortieth year behind us, we are looking forward to our forty-first. I am pleased to report that we renewed our joint powers contracts with 22 local victim assistance centers to continue processing claims. We have also renewed 21 Criminal Restitution Compacts (CRC) with district attorneys' offices across the state to help impose restitution fines and orders and welcomed a new county, Contra Costa, to the CRC roster.

I recently returned from the 31st annual North American Victim Assistance Conference in Atlanta, Georgia. The conference, sponsored by the National Organization for Victim Assistance, was a wonderful opportunity to reconnect with our friends and associates in federal and state victim assistance programs. The workshops were informative and the presentations were thought provoking and moving. California was well represented at the conference, so I am sure many of you will hear about the wonderful southern hospitality that was extended to all of us.

Inside this month's newsletter you will read about the opening of the third Family Justice Center in California in Alameda County. Tom Orloff, Alameda County District Attorney, has brought together diverse services in one spot to provide comprehensive care for victims of domestic violence and their children.

You will also read about the development of our new claims management system. We are excited about the progress we have made on this project over the summer. The new Compensation and Restitution System (CaRES) is a high priority for us. The CaRES technology will bring our business processes into the 21<sup>st</sup> century and improve our ability to help crime victims in California.

## 40 Years of Service to Crime Victims



Tsakapoulos Public Library Galleria

California's Victim Compensation Program commemorated 40 years of service this month as the nation's pioneer state in victim compensation at a special ceremony at the Tsakapoulos Library Galleria in Sacramento. Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger proclaimed July 21st as "Victim Compensation Program Day in California." The theme of the event was, "Honoring the work we do and those who make it happen."

In his proclamation, the Governor praised the state's visionary leadership in assisting victims with the expenses that arise in the aftermath of a crime.

"It is an opportunity to reflect back on the accomplishments of the past four decades and reaffirm our commitment to protecting the rights of crime victims," said Schwarzenegger. The Board received the American flag that flew over the Capitol on July 21st in commemoration of the state's observance of this significant landmark.



The Honorable Judge Lois Haight speaks

The Honorable Lois Haight, Contra Costa County Superior Court Judge, gave the keynote address. Judge Haight served the Reagan Administration as chair of the 1982 President's Task Force on Victims of Crime, resulting in the creation of the Office for Victims of Crime within the U.S. Department of Justice. Her inspiring remarks were well received by the audience of distinguished guests and board employees.

"California's commitment to victims of crime is even stronger today," noted Karen McGagin, the Board's executive officer. "Eligibility for compensation includes help for California residents regardless of where in the world the crime occurred and for nonresidents who become victims of violent crime

within the state of California. Our great state, possessing the foresight and vision to help those affected by violent crime, looks forward to the challenges that still remain while reflecting upon the many accomplishments of the past four decades."

### Governor Schwarzenegger Proclaims July 21 "Victim Compensation Program Day in California"

#### PROCLAMATION

By the Governor of the State of California

In 1965, California became the first state in the nation to establish a victim compensation program to help those impacted by violent crime. Following our state's visionary lead, every state in the country now has a similar program to assist victims with the expenses that arise in the aftermath of crime.

The California Victim Compensation Program has helped nearly 900,000 people, and has paid out more than \$1.5 billion to crime victims and those who provide services to them. More than 100 victim assistance centers in 58 California counties have helped crime victims obtain reparation. The program provides reimbursement to eligible victims and their families for medical treatment, mental health counseling, lost wages, job retraining and funeral expenses incurred as a result of crime.

Helping victims cope with the physical, emotional and financial trauma is a core component of justice in California and the nation. This year, we commemorate 40 years of the California Victim Compensation Program. It is an opportunity to reflect back on the accomplishments of the past four decades and reaffirm our commitment to protecting the rights of crime victims.

NOW, THEREFORE, I, ARNOLD SCHWARZENEGGER, Governor of the State of California, do hereby proclaim July 21, 2005, as "Victim Compensation Program Day in California."

**IN WITNESS WHEREOF** I have hereunto set my hand and caused the Great Seal of the State of California to be affixed this the fifteenth day of July 2005.

Arnold Schwarzenegger  
Governor of California



Board Chairman Fred Aguiar comments on the Program's 40 years of helping crime victims

Fred Aguiar, Secretary of the State and Consumer Services Agency and chair of the three-member Board, said: "I am very proud of this program, its achievements, and the help that it has provided to so many victims and their loved ones throughout California. Employees may take special pride in the success of the program. By helping victims of crime and paying tribute to all those who dedicate their lives to serving them, we can make our communities stronger and more secure."

Fellow board member Michael A. Ramos, San Bernardino County District Attorney and the event's master of ceremonies, acknowledged the accomplishments of the last four decades and paid tribute to the Board's employees who work diligently every day to assist crime victims and their families. Deputy State Controller Windie Scott, representing board member and State Controller Steve Westly, read a letter from John Gillis, Director of the federal Office for Victims of Crime, congratulating the Board on its 40 years of service to victims.

Other highlights of the day included the premier of a commemorative video montage of significant accomplishments in the Board's 40-year history. June E. Hawkins-Brown, a Victim Compensation Specialist for the Board, sang the beautiful song, "What a Wonderful World."



Board employee June Hawkins-Brown poses for a picture before her performance



A commemorative book was on hand for attendees to sign



A historical timeline and facts about the program were on display at the event



Board employees wave to the camera following the celebration



## New Claims Management System Designed with User Input

Getting compensation to victims depends on the quick exchange and efficient storage of information. Today, the Victim Compensation Program relies on a complex claims management database designed in 1989. Soon, thanks to the Compensation and Restitution System (CaRES) now being developed, the Program will be able to utilize up-to-date, web-based technology to increase the quality and speed of the help it provides to crime victims.

CaRES will roll out in June 2006. The new system will use document-imaging to cut down on paper-handling, and enable staff members in locations across the state to share information in real-time.

The design of the new system stresses user input. Staff members who help crime victims every day using the old system will work closely with programmers and project leads to ensure that CaRES meets all the business needs of the Victim Compensation Program. Recently three staff members were selected to work on CaRES full-time.

The three will participate in the design, testing, training and eventual rollout of CaRES. Frank D'Amico, an Assistant Information Systems Analyst and formerly a Victim Compensation Specialist; Rick Jones, a Victim Compensation Specialist; and Patricia Walker, a Victim Compensation Specialist Supervisor, will help CaRES project leads and programmers exchange ideas and information with the systems' eventual users—the people

who enter data, review and analyze claims, and help crime victims access the compensation program.

D'Amico and Jones are "project champions." They work with everyone involved on the project, including programmers, project leads, and vendors in order to understand the new system and explain it to users. They also carry the users' input back to the system programmers and project managers.

"This technology will be a welcome

**The Program will be able to rely on up-to-date, web-based technology to increase the quality and speed of the help it provides to crime victims.**

change. It's web-based, already proven, and, most likely, already familiar to the people who'll be using it. The application is intuitive and user-friendly, and we are looking to automate a lot of the current repetitive work. We hope that everyone is as excited as we are and want to remind everyone that we continue to look for good ideas," said D'Amico.

Walker, a fifteen-year veteran of the compensation program, contributes to



the new system as a "subject matter expert." She is currently working on designing the screens and validating questions that will help compensation specialists calculate the benefits available to individual claimants.

As work on the system progresses, more staff members will be asked to help. As each component of the system is crafted, users will test it, and recommend improvements for the final product.

Program staff members have had a chance to preview the new system. Debra Gonzales, the Board's Chief Information Officer and Project Coordinator presented the concept model for CaRES and the system development in a series of seminars held in August. "We have a sound strategy for CaRES, and we are staying on course," said Gonzales. In the fall, the system will be profiled for victim witness coordinators and contracted staff in county processing centers at a meeting of the Compensation Committee of the Victim Witness Coordinating Council.

## New Budget Officer Joins the Board

Ernesto (Ernie) Hidalgo recently joined the Board as Budget Officer. Ernie has more than 15 years of fiscal experience working in the budget offices of the Department of Consumer Affairs and the Water Resources Control Board, and managing the Budget and Revenue Unit at the Department of Insurance. He also

worked at the Department of Social Services where he headed the Disaster and Client Services Bureau, and later managed the Administration Unit in the Audit Programs Branch. "I am pleased to add my fiscal experience to the expertise of the Board's executive team," said Ernie.

Most recently, Ernie was employed at the Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation where he directed the Administration Services Division for the Board of Prison Terms, which is now known as the Board of Parole Hearings.

## Alameda Family Justice Center Grand Opening on August 31, 2005

California's third family justice center has opened its doors in Oakland. The Alameda Family Justice Center is a comprehensive center where crime victims, especially victims of domestic violence and their children, can get help for many related issues at one location.

Alameda County District Attorney Tom Orloff was instrumental in bringing community agencies together for this venture. The Center houses representatives from Children's Hospital of Oakland, Bay Area Women Against Rape, Deaf Hope, the Family Violence Law Center, the Victim-Witness Assistance Division of the Alameda County District Attorney's Office, and law enforcement agencies. Now

a victim can file a police report, obtain a restraining order, receive medical attention, get crisis intervention help, and file a victim compensation application without traveling all over the county.

Although the justice center's grand opening is not scheduled until August 31, the center began serving victims on August 1. "I am truly excited about this center and look forward to serving victims and survivors in our community," said Lisa Foster, director of the Alameda Victim Witness Assistance Division in the District Attorney's Office. Alameda County was one of just 15 communities awarded a federal grant to set up a Family Justice Center. San Diego County, home to the first family justice center in California, is also coordinating technical assistance

***"I am truly excited about this center and look forward to serving victims and survivors in our community."***

**Lisa Foster  
Alameda County Victim  
Witness Director**

and training the centers receiving federal grants. In addition to San Diego and Alameda counties, Riverside County also set up a family justice center earlier this year.



## Revenue Collection Program Sparks Customer Service Improvements

In April, the Board launched a new automated telephone answering system to help the Revenue Recovery and Accounting Division handle the significant increase in telephone calls resulting from the Court-Ordered Debt Collection Program.

The Court-Ordered Debt Collection Program began in January 2004. The Department of Corrections sends names and addresses of former parolees who still owe restitution to the Board and the Board forwards a number of the records each month to the Franchise Tax Board (FTB), which collects the restitution owed. FTB has contacted more than 21,000 former parolees since the program started.

The letters direct the former parolees to call the Victim Compensation and Gov-

ernment Claims Board if they have questions about the amount they owe. Many of the former parolees who receive letters have questions about the payments or are not aware they still owe restitution. Revenue Recovery staff members have answered thousands of phone calls generated by the letters.

The need for a better way to help those who wanted to pay what they owed became apparent early on. Planning for the automated phone answering system took some time. Launched in April 2005, the system allows the offender to be transferred directly to FTB to make payment arrangements. With several interactive menus,



callers can obtain the information they are looking for or transfer to a live operator to assist them personally. Callers may get answers to their most common questions in both English and Spanish.

Of the almost 1500 received calls since the system was installed, Revenue Recovery staff handled only 583. All the remaining callers had their questions answered automatically or chose to speak directly to someone at FTB. Callers who do need help can get a much more timely response now.

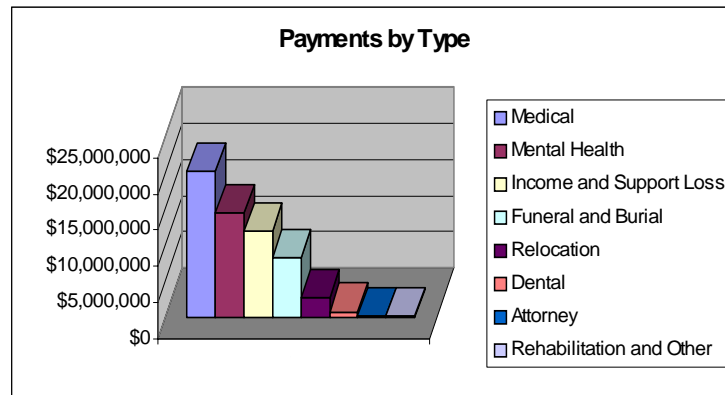
Since January 2004, an additional \$3 million has become available for crime victims through the Board's collaboration with the Department of Corrections and the Franchise Tax Board.

## Fiscal Year 2004-2005 Data Released

Between July 1, 2004 and June 30, 2005, the Victim Compensation Program received more than 47,658 applications for compensation. The program approved 40,342 applications during the course of the year.

Claimants submitted more than 133,734 bills for reimbursement or payment of expenses.

For more information about this year's statistics, please visit our website at [www.victimcompensation.ca.gov](http://www.victimcompensation.ca.gov).



Type of Bill Received	Number of Bills	Payment Awarded
Medical	39,164	\$20,214,986
Mental Health	77,018	\$14,386,032
Income and Support Loss	9,296	\$11,934,542
Funeral and Burial	3,773	\$8,347,945
Relocation	2,727	\$2,784,596
Dental	987	\$830,773
Rehabilitation and Other		\$217,860
Attorneys	769	\$177,001
<b>Total</b>	<b>133,734</b>	<b>\$58,893,735</b>

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